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**NOVEMBER 20, 2003
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**16 DEFENDANTS INDICTED ON
DRUG TRAFFICKING, MONEY LAUNDERING AND GUN CHARGES**

Greenbelt, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that a federal grand jury returned a superseding indictment yesterday charging 16 defendants with drug trafficking, money laundering and possession of firearms. The criminal charges are the result of a 2 year long joint investigation by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, the Prince George's County Police Department and the United States Attorney's Office, and arise from a 4 year conspiracy by the defendants to distribute powder cocaine, crack cocaine and phencyclidine ("PCP") from at least September 1999 to July 2003.

The following 16 defendants are named in the 15-count superseding indictment:

Deone Antonio Melvin, age 24, of Seabrook, Maryland;
Francisco Despiau, age 32, of New York, New York;
Ramone Stephon Jones, age 25, of Upper Marlboro, Maryland;
Stephon Mason, age 29, of Fort Washington, Maryland;
Dadrian Tremayne Williams, age 25, of Largo, Maryland;
Adrian Alexander, age 26, of Suitland, Maryland;
Audrey Melvin, age 41, of Kettering, Maryland;
Antonio Mines, age 33, of Upper Marlboro, Maryland;
Marvin Hall, age 30, of Bowie, Maryland;
Shadita Sweeney, age 27, of Washington, D.C.;
Ellis Matthews, age 36, of Glen Burnie, Maryland;

Lyle Kent Wade, age 41, of Washington, D.C.;
Harold McDade, age 34, of Upper Marlboro, Maryland;
George Norris, age 26, of Riverdale, Maryland;
Jermaine Wilson, age 32, of Upper Marlboro, Maryland; and
Bennie Wilder, age 32, of Capitol Heights, Maryland.

The superseding indictment alleges that Deone Melvin coordinated the movement of bulk quantities of cocaine from New York to the Maryland-Washington, D.C. area in vehicles outfitted with hidden compartments. The drug organization's New York-based supplier, Francisco Despiau, who is currently a fugitive, is also charged in the superseding indictment. One of Deone Melvin's associates, Stephon Mason, allegedly ran his own distribution organization through which he sold powder cocaine, crack cocaine and PCP.

Deone Melvin's mother, Audrey Melvin, is charged with engaging in a two-year long money laundering scheme from March 2001 to June 2003 in which she is alleged to have purchased vehicles for several of the defendants, including Deone Melvin, Ramone Jones and Stephon Mason, and then titled the vehicles in her name in order to conceal the true ownership of those vehicles. Melvin's mother is also charged with drug trafficking conspiracy.

Deone Melvin, Ramone Jones, Stephon Mason, Antonio Mines and Dadrian Williams are also charged with various firearms violations, including possession of several guns in furtherance of their drug trafficking activities. Deone Melvin, Ramone Jones and Stephon Mason are also alleged to have possessed firearms despite their previous convictions for felony offenses.

The superseding indictment also seeks forfeiture of: up to \$5 million from each named defendant; a number of cars; and other items of value seized from the defendants.

Eleven of the 16 defendants have been arrested and 5 remain fugitives. Six of the 11 arrested defendants – Deone Melvin, Ramone Jones, Stephon Mason, Dadrian Williams, Lyle Kent Wade, and Bennie Wilder – have been detained by the court pending their trials. Antonio Mines, Shadita

Sweeney, Ellis Matthews and George Norris are currently subject to electronic monitoring by the court. Audrey Melvin has been released by the court pending her trial, and is currently subject to a variety of pretrial release conditions. The trial in this matter is scheduled for June 8, 2004.

The drug charges carry a maximum punishment of life imprisonment, a \$4 million fine, and 5 years supervised release. The money laundering charges carry a maximum punishment of 20 years imprisonment, a \$500,000 fine and 3 years supervised release. The gun charges carry a mandatory minimum term of five years, to follow any term of imprisonment imposed as to any other charges.

An indictment is not a finding of guilt. An individual charged by indictment is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at some later criminal proceedings.

The criminal charges in this indictment are the result of a joint investigation by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, the Prince George's County Police Department and the United States Attorney's Office. United States Attorney Thomas M. DiBiagio praised the dedicated efforts of the investigating agencies, stating that federal prosecutors in Maryland, together with their law enforcement partners, are committed to dismantling major drug organizations and their financial components in Baltimore and Prince George's County. During various detention hearings, the government has stated that the investigation involved the extensive use of court-authorized wiretaps, including on telephones used by Deone Melvin and Stephon Mason. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Mythili Raman.